

# Welcome, Stranger:

PUBLIC LIBRARIES BUILD  
THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

# Tool Kit



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### About the Urban Libraries Council

A membership organization of North America's premier public library systems and the corporations that serve them, the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) has spent more than 30 years strengthening the public library as an essential part of urban life. Thriving public libraries are the result of collaborative leadership, trustees, library directors, and corporate citizens working together to grasp new opportunities and conduct research that improves professional practice.

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# Welcome, Stranger:

PUBLIC LIBRARIES BUILD THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

## Tool Kit



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## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

# *Lost in Translation*

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**“NO LONGER A PASSIVE REPOSITORY OF BOOKS AND INFORMATION  
OR AN OUTPOST OF CULTURE, QUIET AND DECORUM IN A NOISY WORLD,  
THE NEW LIBRARY IS AN ACTIVE AND RESPONSIVE PART OF THE COMMUNITY  
AND AN AGENT OF CHANGE.”**

— *The Engaged Library*  
2003 publication from ULC

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**T**HE URBAN LIBRARIES COUNCIL publication, *Welcome, Stranger: Public Libraries Build the Global Village*, zeroes in on the challenge many libraries are currently grappling with: communities experiencing rapid immigration. Many immigrants arrive with little or no knowledge of the English language or American culture. Local libraries find themselves thrust into the leading role of helping immigrants make transitions to American life. This wave of rapid immigration shows no sign of slowing down in the next decade. To prepare for this new role, libraries are pursuing new strategies and readying staff, facilities, collections and partnerships.

This curriculum provides you with thought-starter questions and simple tools to use with your staff, board and community focus groups as you align your service plans with current community and global situations. This curriculum builds on the success factors identified in the recent work of Dr. Audrey Singer, Fellow of The Brookings Institution. [Singer, Audrey. 2004. *The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways*. The Brookings Institution: Washington, D.C.]

The “Five Strategies for Success” detailed in *Welcome, Stranger*:

- **LIBRARIES UNDERSTAND LOCAL IMMIGRANT DYNAMICS**
- **LIBRARIES BRING CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE SENSITIVITY TO SERVICE DELIVERY**
- **LIBRARIES BUILD ENGLISH CAPACITY**
- **LIBRARIES CREATE CONNECTIONS TO LOCAL INSTITUTIONS.**
- **LIBRARIES ENCOURAGE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

### **How can your library improve service responsiveness to changing local immigrant populations?**

This tool kit provides exercises that relate to the five successful strategies outlined above. It includes worksheets to help you inventory current resources and partnership activities as well as tools to help you organize, prioritize, and align your service strategies.

# *Understanding Immigrant Dynamics*



- WHO ARE THE NEW AND RECENT IMMIGRANTS IN THE COMMUNITY?
- WHAT ARE THEIR NEEDS?
- WHERE CAN YOU GET CURRENT COMMUNITY INFORMATION?

**P**UBLIC LIBRARIES are gathering population and geographic data from both public sources and informal connections to immigrant networks. When libraries understand neighborhood-level information about new residents, their needs, and the resources available to them, libraries can shape their services and form their partnerships effectively. Especially in cities that have not been traditional immigrant destinations, libraries often lead their communities in the discovery and description of immigrants' needs and concerns.

On the following pages are tools to help you gather

information on new members of your community and determine what, if any, alignments to service strategies are needed. The first tool consists of thought-starter questions. The second tool is an inventory of community information sources. This tool will help you document the sources of information you already use and discover other sources that may prove valuable. The third tool in this section is a template to help design provocative questions that will lead your library and community cohorts deep into the heart of your most pressing immigrant challenges.

1. UNDERSTANDING LOCAL IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS

# *Thought-Starter Questions*

What do we need to know?

**Who are the newer immigrant residents of our community?**

**Where do they live?**

**What is the average age?**

**Where are the school-aged children? How large is this group now? In 5 years?**

**What languages are spoken?**

**What services would help speed their transitions to American life?**

**What do we need to know to serve them?**

**What are the priorities for serving immigrants?**

In the community?

In the library?

**What barriers are keeping immigrants from getting the assistance they need?**

**COMMUNITY BARRIERS**

- Sense of physical isolation
- Transportation
- Safety
- Others \_\_\_\_\_

**LIBRARY BARRIERS**

- Library card registration
- Signage
- Marketing
- Others \_\_\_\_\_

**Where did we find information to answer these questions?**

1. UNDERSTANDING LOCAL IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS

# Examples of Community Information Sources

## ASSOCIATIONS

- |                                |                        |                         |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Immigrant and Refugee Agencies | Civic Events Groups    | Political Organizations |
| Cultural Groups                | Education Groups       | Religious Groups        |
| Business Organizations         | Family Support Groups  | Service Clubs           |
| Charitable Groups              | Health Advocacy Groups | Social Groups           |

## INSTITUTIONS

- |   |                                       |                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Churches, Synagogues, Mosques, Temples      | Schools                               | Hospitals and Clinics |
| The U.S. Census (American Community Survey) | City and County Departments of Health | Police Departments    |
| City and County Planning Departments        | Universities and Community Colleges   | Museums               |

## INDIVIDUALS

- |   |                               |  |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Branch Managers                               | Merchants                     | Cultural Liaisons                        |
| Neighborhood Associations or Homeowner Groups | Chamber of Commerce           | Civic Leaders in Immigrant Neighborhoods |
| Focus Groups                                  | Leaders in Ethnic Communities |  |



## 1. UNDERSTANDING LOCAL IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS

# Community Information Inventory

Use this tool to identify Community Information Sources you currently use and to think about possible new sources of information available in your community. Consult the chart on page 8 for suggestions.

EXISTING	POTENTIAL
ASSOCIATIONS	ASSOCIATIONS
INSTITUTIONS	INSTITUTIONS
INDIVIDUALS	INDIVIDUALS

1. UNDERSTANDING LOCAL IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS

# Situation Assessment

Now that the basic information has been gathered, what's next?

**Where do we want to get to? Given the size and composition of immigrant groups now, what 5-year service goals seem essential? What service goals would be advisable if resources are available?**

**Is serving immigrant groups a priority in our community?**

**Is serving immigrant groups a priority in our library?**

**What are the key resources needed to serve immigrants in the next 5 years? In the next 10 years? (i.e. staff, funding, partnerships).**

**How would we fully integrate services to immigrants into our operational plans? Budgets?**

**Is the political environment in the community supportive of immigrant services?**

**What is the political environment in the library? Is it supportive of immigrant services?**

**Is there anything we would stop doing? Start doing?**

**Should any current program be expanded, given what we know about the growth of immigrant groups in our community?**

## STRATEGY 2

# *Bring Cultural and Language Sensitivity to Service Delivery*



- HOW TO ADDRESS THE LANGUAGE BARRIER
- HOW TO ADDRESS CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

**T**HE BIGGEST BARRIER FOR NEW ARRIVALS is language. Libraries are addressing this with innovations in signage, websites, collections, and provision of basic services in the first languages of their new residents.

Once basic information about new immigrant residents has been gathered and the relative community and library priorities have been considered, the extent of language

and cultural differences must be addressed. Although many libraries with a high influx of non-English speaking patrons have dealt with language issues at some level, this section provides inventory and assessment tools to evaluate what is currently being accomplished and what service strategies and goals need to be expanded or added.

## 2. BRING CULTURAL & LANGUAGE SENSITIVITY TO SERVICE DELIVERY

### *Thought-Starters & Inventory*

THOUGHT-STARTERS	EXISTING	POTENTIAL
<p><b>PERSONNEL</b></p> <p>What are our staff's language capabilities?</p> <p>What are our staff's multicultural competencies?</p>		
<p><b>SPACE/FACILITIES</b></p> <p>Do we have signage in different language/s?</p> <p>How have we organized our collection presentations in our facilities?</p>		
<p><b>COLLECTIONS</b></p> <p>Do we have reading materials, including newspapers and periodicals, in first languages?</p> <p>Do we have audiovisual materials in first languages?</p>		
<p><b>PROGRAMS</b></p> <p>What programs do we offer in first languages?</p> <p>What cultural programs do we offer?</p>		

THOUGHT-STARTERS	EXISTING	POTENTIAL
<p><b>WEBSITE</b></p> <p>Do we feature information about immigrants and refugee services?</p> <p>What kind of information is available online in different languages?</p>		
<p><b>MARKETING</b></p> <p>How are we marketing our resources and services in immigrant communities?</p>		
<p><b>OUTREACH</b></p> <p>What kind of outreach does our library do?</p> <p>Are there any specific outreach programs directed to immigrant communities?</p>		
<p><b>PARTNERS/RELATIONSHIPS</b></p> <p>Who are our partners in bridging the communication and cultural gap?</p> <p>Is a cultural liaison position feasible?</p>		

## 2. BRING CULTURAL & LANGUAGE SENSITIVITY TO SERVICE DELIVERY

### *Next Steps*

EXPAND EXISTING AND/OR CREATE SERVICES	RESOURCES NEEDED	WEBSITE	PARTNERS						
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TECHNOLOGY									

### STRATEGY 3

## *Build English Capacity*



- ADULTS
- EARLY LITERACY
- FAMILY LITERACY

**E** NGLISH PROFICIENCY is the most important factor in immigrants' chances for success. Public libraries, drawing on their century-long experience as builders of literacy of children and families, are expanding their reach to new residents. Early literacy and family literacy programs prepare young children for school. Adult English instruction equips learners with better life skills and job opportunities. With schools and other learning providers as partners, libraries also deliver focused programs on job-hunting, health and nutrition, and other survival needs.

Strategy Three focuses on both formal and informal English language instruction, including adult education, family literacy, and early literacy programs. Partnerships with learning institutions, such as community colleges, are valuable sources of language instruction and marketing support. Within this section inventory and assessment tools are formatted to provide you with an organized overview of services offered and services needed.



### 3. BUILDING ENGLISH CAPACITY

## *Language Services Inventory*

Use this chart to inventory your existing services and services you may potentially need to develop.

EXISTING	POTENTIAL
ADULT ENGLISH INSTRUCTION	ADULT ENGLISH INSTRUCTION
EARLY LITERACY	EARLY LITERACY
FAMILY LITERACY	FAMILY LITERACY
COLLECTIONS	COLLECTIONS
PARTNERSHIPS	PARTNERSHIPS
CLASSES	CLASSES
PROGRAMS	PROGRAMS
OUT OF SCHOOL	OUT OF SCHOOL
FACILITIES	FACILITIES
STAFF/VOLUNTEERS	STAFF/VOLUNTEERS
TECHNOLOGY & TECH FUNDING	TECHNOLOGY & TECH FUNDING

### 3. BUILDING ENGLISH CAPACITY

## Next Steps

EXPAND EXISTING AND/OR CREATE SERVICES	RESOURCES NEEDED	WEBSITE	PARTNERS
ADULT	STAFF		
	FACILITIES		
	FUNDING		
	PROGRAMS		
	MATERIALS		
	PARTNERSHIPS		
	TECHNOLOGY		
EARLY LITERACY	STAFF		
	FACILITIES		
	FUNDING		
	PROGRAMS		
	MATERIALS		
	PARTNERSHIPS		
	TECHNOLOGY		
FAMILY LITERACY	STAFF		
	FACILITIES		
	FUNDING		
	PROGRAMS		
	MATERIALS		
	PARTNERSHIPS		
	TECHNOLOGY		
OUT OF SCHOOL	STAFF		
	FACILITIES		
	FUNDING		
	PROGRAMS		
	MATERIALS		
	PARTNERSHIPS		
	TECHNOLOGY		

## *Create Connections to Local Institutions*



- AGENCIES
- ORGANIZATIONS
- INSTITUTIONS

**M**OST COMMUNITIES are equipped with a broad array of agencies and institutions. Although these organizations provide assistance for work, education, health and housing, recent immigrants are often unable to benefit from their services. Language barriers, geographic isolation, and culture shock are significant impediments. Libraries can help connect the agencies and services designed for the general

population with the newcomers' needs. Business support, health information, and school engagement are leading examples of this work.

The following pages help you inventory the agencies, organizations and institutions in your community and your connections with them. Following the inventory chart is a series of questions that will help you prioritize the partnerships and connections.

#### 4. CREATE CONNECTIONS TO LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

## *Partnership Inventory*

Use this chart to inventory existing partnerships with local institutions and those that have the potential to be important for assisting immigrant transitions.

EXISTING	POTENTIAL
WORKFORCE & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	WORKFORCE & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE AGENCIES	IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE AGENCIES
SCHOOLS (K-12)	SCHOOLS (K-12)
HIGHER EDUCATION	HIGHER EDUCATION
HEALTH & WELLNESS	HEALTH & WELLNESS
SOCIAL SERVICES	SOCIAL SERVICES
LEGAL AID	LEGAL AID
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES	GOVERNMENT AGENCIES
OTHER NON-PROFITS	OTHER NON-PROFITS

#### 4. CREATE CONNECTIONS TO LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

## *Setting Priorities*

Which partnerships will be the most beneficial to our community?

**How do we define a productive partnership?**

**From inventory on page 20, what are the most productive existing partnerships with immigrant communities? Why are they effective? What might improve their effectiveness?**

**Which partnership is the best match with our library? Why?**

**Which partnership yields the highest impact on the immigrant population in our library and community? Why?**

**If we could only pick one partnership to expand, which one would it be? What resources would be required to expand it? Would that partnership still be viable in 5 years?**

**What partnership do we not have, but wish we did? What resources would it take to see it become a reality? What barriers keep it from becoming a reality? What are the community barriers? What are the library barriers?**

**What partnerships are valuable and effective now, but may diminish in importance within the next 5 years? Why?**

**What partnerships are a low priority now, but may be more important in the next 5 years? Why?**

## *Encourage Civic Engagement*



- AWARENESS IN THE LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY
- PARTICIPATION IN THE LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY

**P**ARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AND CIVIC LIFE is not a traditional expectation for many immigrants. Even the simple American act of registering for a library card can be a strange and frightening experience for some. Libraries encourage both community inclusion and newcomer participation. Using their historic role as strong, unbiased public spaces, dedicated to learning

and exploration, they foster public discussion of the challenges faced by both newcomers and the communities receiving them.

Use the inventory chart on the next page to map current and potential opportunities for civic engagement in your community and in your library.

## 5. ENCOURAGE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

# *Civic Engagement Opportunity Inventory*

EXISTING	POTENTIAL
<p><b>AWARENESS IN LIBRARY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural authors</li> <li>• Cultural programs</li> <li>• “One Book, One City”</li> </ul>	<p><b>AWARENESS IN LIBRARY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural authors</li> <li>• Cultural programs</li> <li>• “One Book, One City”</li> </ul>
<p><b>PARTICIPATION IN LIBRARY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board membership</li> <li>• Volunteer Opportunities</li> <li>• Youth Community Service/Employment</li> </ul>	<p><b>PARTICIPATION IN LIBRARY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board membership</li> <li>• Volunteer Opportunities</li> <li>• Youth Community Service/Employment</li> </ul>
<p><b>AWARENESS IN COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Taskforces</li> </ul>	<p><b>AWARENESS IN COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Taskforces</li> </ul>
<p><b>PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voting education</li> <li>• Naturalization education</li> </ul>	<p><b>PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voting education</li> <li>• Naturalization education</li> </ul>
<p><b>OTHER</b></p>	<p><b>OTHER</b></p>



## *Taking These Strategies Further*



**T**HE FIVE STRATEGIES detailed in this toolkit may open new opportunities to strengthen the community and improve the lives of new Americans. For broader and deeper impacts, here are some ideas to consider:

### **UNDERSTAND LOCAL IMMIGRANT DYNAMICS:**

- Develop and share data analyses with library staff, state library agencies, community organizations, local businesses, government agencies, and local news media
- Pay attention to local perspectives on immigrants and immigration policy

### **BRING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY TO SERVICE DELIVERY:**

- Use the library website to create a virtual community center for immigrants
- Work with vendors to develop multilingual product interfaces

- Recruit employees with multiple languages and cultural ties to immigrant groups

### **BUILD ENGLISH CAPACITY:**

- Establish English instructor advisory councils to inform staff about student needs
- Broaden reading club selections to include books from authors familiar to immigrant groups

### **CREATE CONNECTIONS TO LOCAL INSTITUTIONS:**

- Market library services and programs through local immigrant agencies and networks
- Participate in local government initiatives that support business and workforce development for recent immigrants

### **ENCOURAGE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:**

- Create library involvement opportunities for emerging leaders from ethnic communities
- Support staff participation in local immigrant associations and forums

## NOTES

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## NOTES

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**Strengthening the Public Library as an Essential Part of Urban Life**